ELL Reader

Social Studies

How Mail Travels



by Jane York



Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Nonfiction	• Communication • Geography • Transitions	• Definitions • Labels • Map	• Past Tense of Irregular Verbs

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Moving to a new place can be exciting, but you may feel homesick. It may mean leaving old friends behind. It doesn't mean losing those friends, though. There are many ways to communicate, even over long distances.

Writing and sending letters is an easy, low-cost way to stay in touch. People write letters to other people in this country or in other countries.

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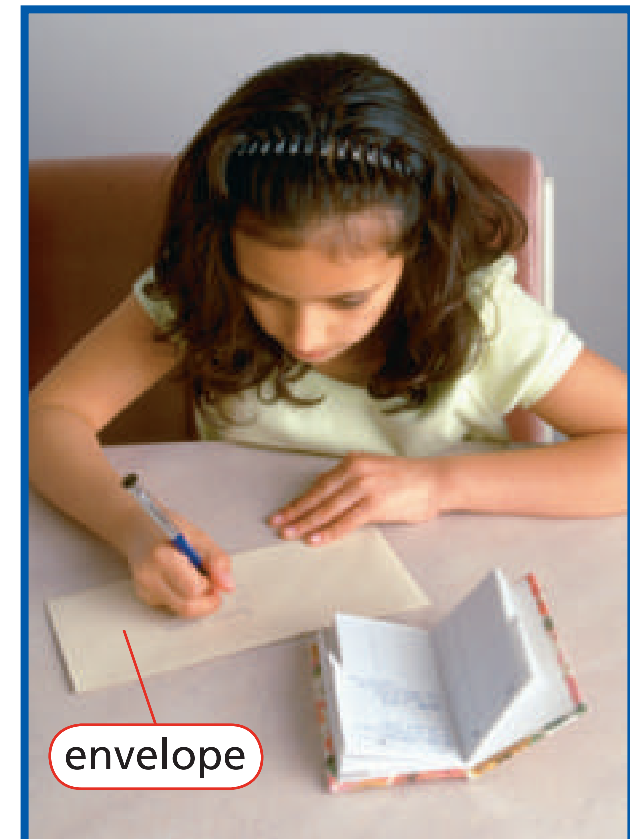
stay in touch: continue to communicate with someone

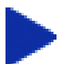




The first step, of course, is to write the letter and put it into an envelope. Write your friend's address on the outside of the envelope. Then write your own address in the upper left corner.

Your address is called the "return address." If for some reason your letter cannot be delivered, the post office will use the return address to send the letter back to you.







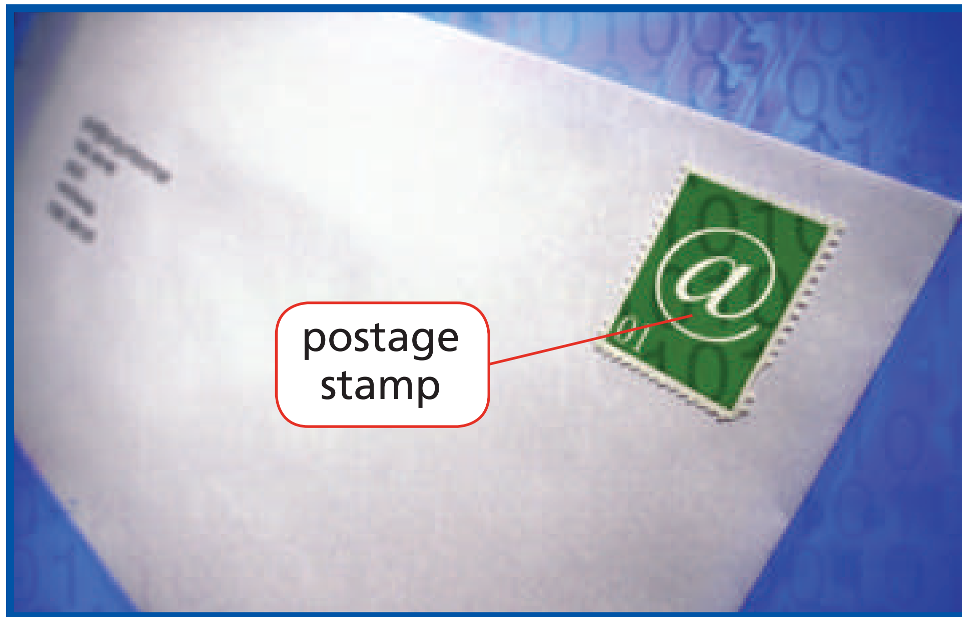
This book presents an example of a letter sent from New York City to someone in the country of New Zealand.

The next step is to add postage stamps. If you are not sure how many stamps to use, a clerk at the post office will be glad to help. Stick the postage stamp or stamps on the envelope. Then drop the mail into the mail slot or the mail collection box.

Your letter is on its way!

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postage stamps: small pieces of paper with sticky backs that are put onto envelopes, cards, or packages to mail them







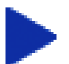


A mail carrier picks up your letter. Then it goes to a sorting center. The letter is put onto a conveyor belt. The conveyor belt carries it past a machine that reads the address. Then the letter is dropped into a bag with other letters and packages that are going to the same place. A mail truck takes long-distance mail to an airport.

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sorting center: a place where letters and packages are grouped according to where they are going

conveyor belt: a belt that moves on rollers and carries things from one place to another





Postal workers load the mailbag onto a plane. While you are sleeping, playing, and going to school, your letter is crossing the ocean. Soon your friend in a faraway place will be opening your letter.

If you're lucky, your friend will sit right down and answer your letter.



Your friend's letter will travel across the ocean too. Once it arrives in the United States, the United States Postal Service begins the job of getting the letter to you.

Postal workers meet the plane and take the mailbag with your letter to another sorting center.

A mail truck takes the letter to the post office near your home. Finally, a mail carrier brings it to your mailbox.

United States

New York City

New Zealand

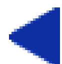




When you open your mailbox, the letter will be there, filled with news from your friend.

You can count on the post office to help you stay connected to your old friends.

count on: depend on





Talk About It

1. What happens after you mail a letter?
2. What are some jobs postal workers do?

Write About It

3. Write a letter to a friend on a separate sheet of paper. This sample shows where to write the parts of a letter.

(Write today's date.)

Dear _____,

(Write what you want to tell your friend.)

Your friend,
(Sign your name.)

Extend Language

For most verbs, you can add *-ed* to form the past tense. Today I *walk.* Yesterday I *walked.* For some verbs, we form the past tense differently. The past tense of *tell* is *told.* Find out the past tense forms of these verbs: *stick, write,* and *send.*

Photographs
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